



Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) Program Guidelines

**Adopted
by the
Virginia Board of Education**

**Office of Adult Education and Literacy
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INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PLAN (ISAEF) PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Virginia School Laws, Section 22.1-254, Compulsory attendance required; excuses and waivers; alternative education program attendance; exemptions from article, 1999, authorizes local school boards to allow the fulfillment of compulsory attendance requirements by any student who is 16 years of age and for whom an Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEF) is developed in a meeting between the student, the student's parents, and the principal or designee. The Virginia Board of Education is charged with development of the guidelines associated with the ISAEF program. A student for whom an ISAEF has been granted and who fails to comply with the components of the ISAEF shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements. Students enrolled with an ISAEF shall be counted in the average daily membership (ADM) of the school.

School divisions that allow students to fulfill compulsory attendance requirements by granting them an ISAEF must adhere to all guidelines prescribed by the Board of Education. These guidelines

- 1) reflect the legislative intent that created the ISAEF option;
- 2) adhere to the agreement between the Department of Education and the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education that permits testing of students who are between the ages of 16 and 18 years and enrolled in high school programs; and
- 3) are consistent with Board of Education standards concerning the quality of all publicly funded educational programs.

These guidelines address the specific purpose of the ISAEF program, identify essential elements that school divisions are required to include in each student's ISAEF, and outline administrative procedures that describe the process from enrollment in an ISAEF program through release from compulsory attendance.

School divisions that accept funds from the Department of Education to support ISAEF programs must provide assurance annually that they will adhere to all Board of Education guidelines. Additionally, divisions are required to report student information to the Department of Education for annual evaluation reports to the Governor and the General Assembly. Only those school divisions that have approved ISAEF programs may authorize enrolled students between the ages of 16 and 18 years to take the GED Tests.

Purpose

The Board of Education believes that the first option for every high school-aged student should be to work towards completing the requirements for a standard or advanced studies diploma. Although every effort should be made to counsel students to remain in high school through graduation, there are circumstances when this is no longer a viable option. In such cases, the Board desires to provide students with a “second opportunity” to exit high school with a well-recognized credential and the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful transition to adulthood, an option more desirable than dropping out of school.

An ISAEP may be developed when the student demonstrates substantial need for an alternative program, meets enrollment criteria, and demonstrates an ability to benefit from the program. The need is determined by a student’s risk of dropping-out of school. A student may qualify to be granted an ISAEP if dropping-out is imminent. A student’s ability to benefit is determined by achieving satisfactory scores, as determined by the Board of Education, on a standardized measure of reading and the Official GED Practice Test.

Program Requirements

School divisions must include the following elements in each student’s ISAEP:

- 1) career guidance counseling;
- 2) mandatory enrollment in a GED preparation program or other alternative education program approved by the local school board;
- 3) counseling on the economic impact of failing to complete high school, and
- 4) provisions for re-enrollment in school.

Career guidance and counseling should include a comprehensive vocational assessment that can assist students in developing career goals. Students with an ISAEP also must be provided opportunities for career and technical education (CTE) opportunities. The opportunities may vary from highly structured and formal CTE programs offered at the high school or regional career and technical education center to paid employment to unpaid internships.

School divisions must provide GED preparation programs or other alternative education classes that help students prepare for the GED Tests. Enrollment in such programs is mandatory and school divisions are required to maintain attendance records. Although class scheduling and weekly hours of attendance are flexible, school divisions are expected to provide instruction for sufficient length and duration to maximize a student’s chance to pass the GED Tests on the first attempt.

ISAEP students and their parents must receive counseling on the impact of failing to complete a traditional high school program. School divisions should ensure that both parents and students are aware of the differences between the high school diplomas authorized by the Board of Education and the GED credential. Documentation of informed consent is required before a student may be granted an ISAEP and should be located and maintained in the student’s school records for the period of time prescribed by law.

Students with an ISAEP may elect to re-enroll in the regular school or other alternative school program for any reason prior to completing their plan. School divisions shall have written procedures that describe the provisions for re-enrollment.

Administrative Procedures

Any student or parent may request an ISAEP. However, school divisions must follow all of the following administrative procedures before a student may be granted an ISAEP.

Step One: Initial Principal-Parent-Student (PPS) Meeting

The purpose of the initial principal-parent-student meeting is to help parents and students understand the following options for fulfilling the compulsory attendance requirement: (1) remaining in the regular school program, (2) enrolling in an alternative educational program, or (3) completing an ISAEP. The principal or designee will provide full disclosure of the relevant aspects of the program, written descriptions of the required program components, a listing of the parties involved in developing and implementing the ISAEP, and complete information regarding an academic and career and technical education assessment. At this initial meeting, parents will sign a consent form to attest that they have received full disclosure regarding the ISAEP program and understand all requirements for each of the options for completing public school.

Step Two: Student Evaluation/Assessment

The purpose of the student evaluation is to provide the student, the parents, and the principal/designee with the information necessary to determine the program of study that is in the best educational interest of the student. Students planning to fulfill compulsory attendance requirements by completing an ISAEP must first demonstrate that they have the ability to benefit from such a program. School divisions should be familiar with GED preparation and testing accommodations for students with disabilities and include accommodations in the screening process and in the ISAEP. A reading achievement test, the GED Practice Test, and a career and technical education assessment will be conducted to provide the necessary information on which to base decisions. Evaluation results will be used in the development of each student's plan, if he or she qualifies.

The GED test battery is normed on graduating high school seniors throughout the United States. Because the tests measure the outcomes of a traditional high school education, certain levels of competence should be established for entry into the GED preparation/testing option. Both of the following minimum academic achievement criteria must be met for students to be granted an ISAEP:

- Students shall score 7.5 grade equivalent or higher on a recognized standardized measure of reading achievement.
- Students shall score 410 or higher on each of the subtests of the Official GED Practice Test.

Step Three: Development of the ISAEP (Second Principal-Parent-Student Meeting)

The student, the parents, and the principal/designee are required partners for developing an ISAEP. Other individuals may be invited to participate as needed and as required. The ISAEP will address the needs of the student based on the evaluation results. Each student's plan should be clearly defined and include:

- measurable academic and career and technical education goals and objectives;
- attendance requirements for enrollment in GED preparation classes;
- attendance requirements for enrollment in career and technical education-related classes (e.g., employment, apprenticeship, cooperative learning experiences, paid or unpaid internships, and workplace readiness training);
- methods and time frame for evaluating student's progress;
- procedures to provide parents with regular progress reports, and
- requirements for program completion.

The student, the parents, the principal/designee, and other appropriate individuals are required to sign the initial ISAEP and any subsequent amendments. A student granted an ISAEP is not released from compulsory attendance until the school board deems all elements of a student's plan to be complete, which includes successfully passing the GED Tests. Any student who fails to complete the plan and does not return to school shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements, and appropriate legal actions will be taken.

Step Four: Exiting the ISAEP Program

Students can exit the ISAEP program in one of the three ways described below:

- Students can be released from compulsory attendance by the local school board if the ISAEP is successfully completed, which includes successfully passing the GED Tests;
- Students can re-enroll in the K-12 program, including regular high school or some other alternative education program approved by the school board; and
- Students can discontinue their involvement in the ISAEP program and drop their enrollment in any recognized educational program. Such action would be a violation of compulsory attendance laws and will result in notifying the courts as appropriate.

School divisions shall report a change in a student's enrollment status to the Department of Education.